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## Corrections to legislation required

# Naturland demands organic criteria for biogas

**Graefelfing – At today’s press conference in Munich, Germany, Naturland demands from the German government and the EU to link the production of biogas to organic criteria. Undesirable developments, such as those witnessed in the past when maize monocultures received encouragement, must be avoided. “Were one to apply the strict criteria observed in the food industry, the prefix “bio” would not be allowed for biogas”, stated Hans Hohenester, chairman of Naturland’s steering committee. Organic agriculture, the most sustainable form of farming, should serve as a role model for the basic parameters pertaining to biogas generation.**

### Correcting undesirable developments

Naturland presented its position paper on biogas to the general public in Munich, in which it gave a summary of the undesirable developments which have become apparent in recent years. Its prime targets were the growing numbers of maize monocultures with their negative effects on the soil, water and biodiversity, and the reduction in the number of crop rotation cycles which has led to increased pest pressure. There are other effects too: e.g. the conversion of wet grasslands to arable land, and the intensification of grassland to provide missing forage for animal husbandry or co-substrate for biogas plants.

### Exploiting positive incentives

“Since it does without easily soluble mineral fertilisers and pesticides, organic agriculture consumes much less energy than conventional agriculture,” explained Dr. Kurt-Jürgen Hülshberger, a professor at Munich’s technical university (TUM). Carbon dioxide is bound in the humus layer. In organic agriculture, the humus layer is deliberately built up, so consequently organically farmed soil can absorb a greater amount of CO<sub>2</sub>. The production of biogas has to be aligned to the standards of organic agriculture so that this basically positive development, the generation of energy from biomass, does not hit a brick wall.

Naturland therefore demands that farms managed according to organic guidelines are awarded a bonus. To earn it, they would have to do without pesticides and agricultural genetic engineering, and would be prohibited from ploughing up grassland. Furthermore, their crop rotation cycles must be properly balanced and the humus balance well adjusted. Renewable energy should serve as a complement to agricultural production, and not supplant it. Only waste material from the production of foodstuffs and discarded products from landscape cultivation should be used. Small plants of up to 100 kilowatts should receive higher compensation, and local heat networks should be established to avoid the unnecessary transport of substrate and to provide economic support to rural areas.

*Naturland promotes organic agriculture throughout the world. With its 46,000 farmers, it is one of the major organic farming associations. As befits a forward-looking association, Naturland regards organic competence and social responsibility as interdependent.*

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